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THE AIMS OF THE
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BOLSHEVIKI - - -

(ADDENDUM TO THE PARTY PROGRAMME)

By B. SHUMIATZKI.

PRICE TWOPENCE

PUBLISHED BY THE
PEOPLE'S RUSSIAN INFORMATION BUREAU

152, FLEET STREET, LONDON, E.C. 4.

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The Aims of the Bolsheviks

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By B. SHUMIATZKI.

Published by the Russian Socialist Federation, 1919.

You know that at the present time the avowed and unavowed enemies of the working class—the capitalists and their parasites, the clergy of all denominations, officials of high or middle rank, and other paid tools of the bureaucratic confraternity—are everywhere vilifying the Bolsheviks, those revolutionary Socialists who, in the stormy tide of events, have remained true to their aims and to their determination to fight against those who impede the progress of the people, whether the opponents be the capitalist class as a whole, Kerensky's notorious Provisional Government, individual Socialists who have deviated from the old revolutionary path, or even entire Socialist sections such as the Left and Right Social Revolutionaries and the S.D. Mensheviks.

What, then, is this Communist, Bolshevik Party? Why is there such gnashing of teeth at the mere mention of its name among the merchants, the manufacturers, and the financial interests? Why has this party become the pet aversion of all those who work little and eat much? Where has it sprung from, and whither is it leading the workers and poorest peasantry? By what means does it intend to bring about the liberation of the peoples?

This pamphlet will endeavour to make all these matters clear to the reader.

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I.—Who are the Bolsheviks and what is their Origin?

The Bolsheviks have not appeared suddenly in recent years in the midst of the Russian S.-D. Party. As far back as 1900, after the split in the "Union of Russian Social Democrats," a new political union was formed by the first Russian followers of revolutionary working-class Socialism. It became known as the Revolutionary Organisation and Social Democrat, and was joined by all the members of the first Russian S.D. organisation abroad—the Group of the Emancipation of Labour, people like Plekhanov, Zassulitch, Alexandrov and others.

These workers (or "stariki"—elders, as they were called), who had left the "Union of Russian Social Democrats," had the political emancipation of the people as their aim; they wished to free the people from the position of servitude under the landowners and the autocracy, and by so doing to prepare them for a far greater struggle—the struggle for Socialism. One of these "stariki" was Plekhanov, who in 1914 took up a distinctly hostile attitude to the aspirations of the revolutionary workers.

Those workers who remained in the "Union of Social Democrats" went by the name of "the young ones" (Molodyie). They deemed it necessary for the party organisations of these days to confine their work to an agitation on economic lines in order to wrest from the master class an immediate and certainly partial amelioration of their labour and social conditions. They assumed that the Russian working class was not yet ripe for a wide political struggle.

This was the chief point of disagreement between the two sections. It very soon definitely divided the Russian Social Democrat Workers' Party into two wings. This party had just come into being through the amalgamation of the S.D. groups—"Iskra" (= the Spark) and "Zarya" (= the Dawn).

At first this division did not assume very clear forms, and it was only as a result of a two years' test of live social revolutionary activity that the rôle of the Right and Left S.D.'s became clear. This happened in 1903, at the second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party. There the two sections definitely separated, the majority of the Congress forming the Bolsheviks, headed by Lenin, and the minority, the Mensheviks, headed by Martov. Henceforth the struggle between these sections went on unceasingly in connection with a whole series of highly-important questions of theory and practice in the revolutionary movement of the working masses, and especially that of Russia.

II.—Dissensions in the Past.

The Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks disagreed on the following questions:—

Who are the motive power of the revolution? The Bolsheviks asserted that, apart from the revolutionary vanguard—the industrial proletariat—the motive power in the struggle for the political and economic freedom of the whole people is not the upper and middle bourgeoisie, but solely the democracy, *i.e.*, the poorest peasantry and the strata of the lower bourgeoisie, akin to it. They held that only the working class and their "fellow travellers" of the lower bourgeoisie had an interest in establishing the people's power in Russia. This interest was not shared by the upper and middle strata of the bourgeoisie, which even under the Czarist régime had received their share of power in the shape of admittance to posts in the administration of the State, of voting rights for the Imperial Duma, and for the Councils of the Empire, and in local social work in the Zemstvos ("county councils") and municipalities. And this, too, at a time when the masses were fleeced

by heavy and unjust taxation imposed on them by the predatory bureaucracy, and were at the mercy of the capitalists and merchants and all those who, under the Czarist autocracy, had access to governmental power and the public purse.

For this reason the Bolsheviks refused even to admit the possibility of the workers ever coming to an understanding with capitalist parties on the question of joint political action. They maintained that there must be no compromise with capitalists, or with men like Guchkov, Miliukov, Terestchenko and Buryshkin, who were all much nearer to Czarism than to the people.

The hostility of the Russian bourgeoisie towards the people and their sympathy for the old order was manifested a few days before the February (March), 1917, Revolution in the following incident. On February 14th, 1917, the Czar convened the Imperial Duma. The workers, realising that they were betrayed and deceived, and that by the convening of the Duma the landowners and capitalists were only throwing dust in their eyes and seeking to lull their revolutionary ardour, decided to go to this institution of the master-class, not with humble petitions and slavishly-bowed heads, but with weapons in their hands and revolutionary demands on their lips. The workers meant to tell the Duma not to waste torrents of words about the "fatherland" being in danger from a foreign foe, but to fight the enemy at home—Nicholas the last, and the capitalists who were supporting him in a war profitable only to themselves.

What was the bourgeoisie's answer to the workers of Petrograd? It was Miliukov, the leader of the capitalist party, the party of so-called "National Freedom," who was the mouthpiece of the bourgeoisie on that occasion, and his message was that a procession

of armed workers to the Imperial Duma constituted a provocation, and a betrayal of the struggle with the foreign foe. And already some of our Right Wing Socialists, as, for instance, G. Plekhanov, formerly leader of the Russian Socialists, were joining in the chorus of the bourgeoisie !

All this was typical of the bourgeoisie and the part it played in the Russian Revolution. How, indeed, could it have been otherwise ? for by the very fact of its being the bourgeoisie it cannot but be against the people. There is a Russian proverb which says that "as long as the pike is in the water the carp must beware." True to this wise, popular saying, the Bolsheviks have ever been watchful in the stream of political and social action. Instead of union with the predatory pikes, the Czars and the capitalists, they had planned long ago, even in the gloomy days of Czarist shootings and other repressive measures, a more profitable union for the people—that of the working class and the peasantry. They maintained that only the united workers and peasants would have the power to create a true people's government and set up the so-called Dictatorship, *i.e.*, the supreme power of the proletariat and peasantry, in the form of a sovereign All-Russian Soviet of Workers', Soldiers', Peasants' and Cossacks' Delegates.

The Mensheviks' conception of the Revolution was as follows :—

We must, they averred, support and encourage the bourgeoisie in the struggle with Czarism in order to force them to adopt more energetic action. As the present revolution is not in itself directed against the rich, but is a political bourgeois-democratic revolution against Czarism, it is in the interests of the struggle to unite the forces of the working class with those of the bourgeoisie against the common enemy.

And now, what were to be the means and methods of the struggle ? The Bolsheviks have always believed in the general political strike and a popular armed rising of the masses of workers and peasants, organised and led by the party which has never betrayed the red flag of the revolutionary Social-Democracy. The Mensheviks, on the other hand, considered the strike and armed rising as secondary means ; they maintained that such "extreme" means should only be applied after a concerted movement of all dissatisfied classes of the population, including the bourgeoisie. They held that their foremost task was to support any kind of movement of opposition to the old order, and, in this connection, they put great hopes in the use of all manner of legal, open and permitted opportunities for the hastening of a revolutionary upheaval.

What was the attitude towards the Imperial Duma ? The Bolsheviks boycotted the first Imperial Duma erected on the grave of the Revolution of 1905, which had been crushed by Czarism. They refused to take part in the elections, but, on the contrary, opposed them by word and deed, saying that the Imperial Duma was the result of an agreement between the Czarist Government and the landowning, capitalist class, which had thus received by it another instalment of governing power.

The Imperial Duma, said the Bolsheviks, is to the representatives of the old order merely a means of arresting the young revolutionary movement of 1905 and of preventing its achieving full success for the people. It is only natural that the Bolsheviks could not recognise a Duma imposed by force of arms on the people of the Czar and the bourgeoisie, whose leaders, Guchkov, Miliukov, and others, had supported the suppression of the Moscow, Krasnoiarsk, and Kronstadt risings. A poor substitute this for the People's Govern-

ment, as outlined by the Revolution of 1905! They fought the Duma and other Czarist devices quite openly; but when the political "*mise en scène*" underwent a change, and the boycott ceased to be an echo of the December risings in Moscow, in the Urals and in Siberia (Krasnoiarsk, Tchita and Vladivostock), then the Bolsheviks decided to take part in the elections to the second Imperial Duma.

But why did they call the people to participate in the Duma elections? Was it in order to pass legislation there against the people, in concert with the Czar, the landowners and bourgeoisie? By no means. We are not interested, said they, in the legislative work of the capitalistic, landowning talking shop, nor in parliamentarianism for the sake of parliamentary reforms; but we want to explain to the people from the rostrum of the Duma that only in revolutionary struggle, in armed rising and in the general political strike lies their hope of emancipation from Czarist autocracy and of the establishment of a true People's Government (see Lenin's pamphlet: "Social Democracy and Election Compromises," page 5. Published 1905).

For this reason, the Bolsheviks, having entered the second, third and fourth Duma, repudiated the necessity of their participation in the elaboration and passing of legislation, declaring that every measure signed by the landowners' and Capitalists' Imperial Duma would necessarily be a measure against the people. Their participation thus took the form of a watching brief over the activities of Czarism and its ally, the bourgeoisie. By their fiery speeches they dragged into the light every attempt of these powers of darkness to deceive the masses by laws introduced in the Duma, such, for example, as the community law, the laws on partial insurance of the workers, on the Press, on the administration of justice and on the Zemstvos or county councils.

In all the Dumas the Bolsheviks opposed the voting of State credits, because, in the main, all this money was used by the Czar, his servants, the bureaucrats, and their newly-acquired ally, the bourgeoisie, against the interests of the people. It was used for the upkeep of hosts of thieving officials; for the maintenance of *gendarmes* and police used in open fight with the people; for the passing of laws in the interests of capitalists; for increase of armaments and preparation for wars which only benefit capitalists, making enormous profits from inflated war prices.

III.—Chief Dissensions during the Period preceding the October (November) Revolution.

All through the period from March to November, 1917, there were dissensions between the Mensheviks and Right Social Revolutionaries * on the one hand, and the Bolsheviks on the other, concerning three of the most important questions of the Revolution and of modern times:—

- i. The question of the land;
- ii. The question of war and peace;
- iii. The question of the organisation of the country during the revolutionary period.

i. *The Land Question.*—The opinion of the Bolsheviks on this important national question was that all land must belong to the working people and peasants, the process of handing over must be organised, and there must be no compensation to private owners.

Up to this point the Mensheviks and the Right Social Revolutionaries were in complete agreement with the Bolsheviks; but, later on, when words had to be trans-

* The Right Social Revolutionaries, form that small section of the former S.R. Party, who, deaf to the calls of honour and conscience, have joined the capitalists, principally because in this group of the "intelligentsia" capitalism had secured a cosy little place in the sun.

lated into deeds, the two first-named parties, who had already betrayed the people for the sake of friendship with the bourgeoisie, parted company with the Bolsheviks, and on various occasions fought with arms against them and the peasants who followed them. For instance, the Provisional Government, which included Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries, Tseretelli and Tchernov, sent punitive expeditions to the district of Tambov; and it was the Right S.R.'s who organised the risings of the junkers in Moscow, Irkutsk, and other places.

At first these parties played the "wait and see" game with the peasants, saying that the land question would be settled when the Constituent Assembly met. But days, weeks, and months went by, and still the peasants did not get their land. Gradually the character of the Constituent Assembly became manifest, and it was not such as to reassure those who had once built their hopes on it. The elections were to take place at a time when all truly national organisations and newspapers, in the rear as well as at the front, had been destroyed by Kerensky's capitalist government; when, at the front, to please Russian and foreign capitalists, the soldiers were forced to resume the offensive and the death penalty had been reinstated; when free speech had been abolished and the prisons were crowded with working-class people. Under such circumstances, it was naturally a foregone conclusion that the power in the Constituent Assembly would be in the hands of the bourgeoisie and its allies, the Right Socialists.

When the masses of the people understood that they had been betrayed by the Right Socialist parties, and that these parties were delaying the settlement of the land question until the meeting of the Constituent Assembly, they rose and accomplished the October

(November) Revolution, the real People's Revolution. By this Revolution they created their own workers' and peasants' power, the power of the Soviets, which have given them land and freedom.

The Bolshevik party, ever since the February (March) Revolution, had expressed that view on the land question which ultimately prevailed. It had advised the peasants to organise themselves into local soviets, to seize the land without further delay, and on no account to tolerate destruction of property, but on the contrary to make the greatest efforts to increase the production of corn and other agricultural products, as our soldiers, who at that time were still fighting for the capitalists on the different fronts, were suffering from shortage of bread. The Bolsheviks realised that, in order to give all the land to the workers, a close union between the town and village workers was essential. Without such a union it is impossible, they said, to overthrow the capitalists, for unless they are at once deprived of their power, no transference of the land to the workers will save the people from beggary. One cannot eat the land, and without money, without capital, one cannot get implements, seeds and cattle. The peasants must not put their trust in the capitalists and rich moujiks (who are also capitalists), but only in the town workers. It is only by a close union between them and the poorest peasants that the land, the railways, the banks and the factories will become the property of all the workers, and, failing this, the mere transference of the land to the people will not do away with want and poverty.

At the present time, the people have already initiated such organised transference of estates, factories, workshops and mines to their lawful owners. It is true that the process is yet only in its initial stages. Only the first step has been taken, called Nationalisation, namely, the transference of the whole economy into the hands

of the working people, welded into an organ of its class power. Of course it would be better if we could introduce Socialism at once and put the management of all countries in the world into the hands of the workers; but as long as the dispossessed classes in other countries have not come into their own, we are obliged to keep our conquests within the limits of nationalisation. For this reason the Bolsheviki, when asked why they, who have declared war on private property, do not immediately introduce Socialism, say, "We have already made a beginning; we have undermined the roots of capitalism; we have already grown the young trees of the new order: but without the help and co-operation of the workers of all countries we are unable to grow the mighty oaks of Socialism, whose branches will overspread the world. But we are up and doing, and in time we will accomplish it! The time is approaching when these proletarians who have arisen, and these who even now are rising the world over, will complete our revolutionary beginning, and together with us, will lead it to a victorious end.

Thus spoke, and still speak, the Bolsheviki.

The Mensheviki, however, and especially the party of the Right Social Revolutionaries, who still, strange to say, imagine themselves to be Socialists, took up a different attitude on the land question. At first they urged the people to be patient until the convocation of the Constituent Assembly; and when it was on the point of meeting, when by means of methods of strangulation adopted against workers', soldiers' and peasants' organisations, these Right Socialists had established in the Assembly their own majority, they began to act more boldly. Shortly before the meeting of the Constituent Assembly, they had passed through their preliminary parliament a land law embodying compensation and leasehold, a law which handed over to the capitalist all land occupied by cattle-ranches, stud-farms and other works.

ii. *The Question of War and Peace.*—The Bolsheviki had always maintained that the war was being waged by the capitalists of all countries for the annexation of territory, for the acquirement of new markets for their manufactured goods, and of new places for the obtaining of raw materials: in brief, the capitalists needed the war in order to enrich themselves and to make enormous profits.

Under no circumstances could the war bring the workers anything but disaster and ruin. That is why the Bolsheviki were uncompromising opponents of the war and refused to support the capitalists of one side against those of the other, knowing full well that the capitalists of all countries are the enemies of the workers. In deeds, not merely in words, they waged a struggle for a universal people's peace.

A truce and subsequent coalition with the bourgeoisie, leading to the support of its annexationist military and commercial treaties, would have constituted a betrayal of the working class. The workers had already been betrayed by the participation of the Right Socialists in the Provisional Government which was committed to such treaties. This alliance even compelled the Right S.R.'s to acquiesce in the offensive undertaken by Kerensky at the instigation of the Anglo-French capitalists.

The Bolsheviki knew that the capitalists of all countries were deceiving the people by promising a speedy and just peace, whilst in reality they were prolonging an annexationist war. The Russian capitalists, who had the Provisional Government under their thumb, did not want to publish those secret, predatory treaties which the late Czar, Nicholas Romanov, had made with the capitalists of England, France and other countries in order to take Constantinople and Armenia from the

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Turks, and Galicia from the Austrians. In fact, the capitalist Provisional Government openly supported these treaties, although at the head of it were people who called themselves Socialists. Now that the workers have assumed power and established the Soviets, these shameful secret treaties have been published. They have shown the world into what depths of lying and robbery it has been led by the capitalist classes.

The Bolsheviki looked upon the fraternising of the proletarians of all countries in the trenches as one of the most effective weapons in the struggle for peace. They made full use of this weapon, which has already initiated the revolutionary movement in Austria and Germany, to crush which the capitalists of these countries launched the last offensive against peaceful cities. The Bolsheviki say that this offensive is one of the last spasmodic efforts of capitalism.* Like drowning men, the German, Ukrainian and other capitalists are grasping at a straw, and having gathered their last strength, are throwing themselves against the Russian Revolution.

The Mensheviki and Right Social-Revolutionaries held far other views on the war. They said that as the war had been foisted on us by Czarism, we were not able to bring it to a close. Therefore, they not only supported the war in so many words, but even whilst they were in power, drove the Russian army into an offensive which cost us thousands of lives.

iii. *The Question of the Organisation of the Country.*—Russia is at present almost the only country in the world where a people's revolution is throbbing and seething. Therefore it is only natural that under such conditions, the question of the organisation of the

* This pamphlet was written and published in Siberia before the German Revolution. The above passage shows how true, and almost prophetic, was the Bolsheviki's understanding of world events.

country and the form of its proletarian dictatorship should arouse general interest.

There was a general agreement that Russia must be a republic, even on the part of many capitalists and landowners who had previously always backed the monarchy, but who had come to the conclusion that on no account would the Russian people tolerate the re-establishment of the Czarist power. For this reason the capitalists have directed all their efforts towards making the Russian Republic as near as possible a replica of the Czarist régime. Such a sham republic, as many examples in other countries prove, could have easily been transferred again into a monarchy. They therefore wished to preserve the bureaucracy which dominated the people, and the police force and standing army, which stood separate from the people, and which were commanded by non-elected generals and officers—for the generals and officers, if not elected, will always belong to the capitalist and landowning class.

That is why the Bolshevik party, which is the party of the class-conscious workers and poorest peasants, is endeavouring to establish a different kind of republic. It wants a republic where there will be no police force like the old one, lording it over the people; where all functionaries, from the lowest to the highest, will be subject to election and recall at any time, according to the will of the people—their pay not to be higher than that of a good workman; where all army authorities will also be elected and the old standing army, officered by members of the bourgeois class, replaced by a citizen army or people's militia. The whole state power in such a republic must belong to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Delegates. The workers and peasants form the majority of the population, and therefore all administrative power must belong to their Councils and not to the bureaucrats.

We must look forward, say the Bolsheviks, and not backward, to such a republic as will only serve to consolidate the reign of capitalism, by making use of all the old monarchic organs of government, such as the police, the army and the bureaucracy; we must look forward, making use of these new forms and institutions brought into being by the Russian Revolution.

The Soviets and the power of the Soviets are a transitional step on the road to Socialism. It is the power of the workers and peasants created for the purpose of arousing and achieving the revolt of the poor of all countries against the capitalist system. And this workers' power will in the end destroy all arbitrary power, namely, the mastery of man over man, and will establish on earth equality and fraternity, *i.e.*, Socialism.

As on the two previous questions of the land and of the war, so on this all-important question of the organisation of the country, the Mensheviks and Right Social-Revolutionaries were once again found to differ widely from the Bolsheviks. They said that the revolution was being made, not only by the one class of workers of town and country, but also by other classes, and that power must consequently be representative of the interests of all classes. On the strength of this argument, both these parties fraternised with the capitalists in power and formed the Provisional Government of Kerensky, which has since been driven from power.

IV.—Conclusion.

Such are, in the main, the aims of the Bolsheviks, and such are the causes of their quarrel with the Mensheviks and Right Social Revolutionaries.

And now, reader, do you not understand how completely right was that unsophisticated person, who, when asked what a Bolshevik was, answered:—

“A Bolshevik is that kind of Socialist who wants the people to acquire, by means of revolution, all the good things of this world, and not to postpone till to-morrow what it can do to-day.”

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